

BRA
2394



NEW ENGLAND MONTH

SEVENTEENTH-CENTURY FESTIVAL

Saturday, July 19 - Friday, July 25
on Boston Common

- I. Co-Sponsors: The Plimoth Plantation
The Society for the Preservation of New England Antiquities (SPNEA)
The Museum of Fine Arts, Boston (MFA)
Jubilee 350
Boston University

-- Plimoth Plantation will coordinate the entire Festival.

II. Description of Festival

The setting will be a Market Fair containing elements of Boston's first marketplace as well as markets of English fairs of the period which were familiar to the early colonists.

The reconstructed marketplace on Boston Common will be defined by shed-like structures similar to those found in period markets. The frame of the Fairbanks House will be part of the marketplace complex. In the center of the area a rough platform resembling the uncompleted base of Boston's first Town House will provide a stage for entertainments and re-enactments. The market will also contain such features of Boston's marketplace as the stocks and pillory, the sawpit, the Market Bell, animal pens and canvas booths.

Within this physical setting, the week will feature both special and continuous activities designed to create a Seventeenth-Century environment. As an important element in the physical and period adjustment from today's Boston back into the Seventeenth Century, all visitors will be oriented to the marketplace through three or four "time tunnels", where graphics and sound will introduce them to the "living history" environment. While all period personnel will appear in appropriate costume and speak in Seventeenth-Century dialect, modern guides will be stationed at information centers to assist in the orientation process.

The first weekend (July 19 - 20) will focus on the erection of the Fairbanks House frame, which will demonstrate all activities involved with period house construction. This is a major project of the MFA and SPNEA to build a Seventeenth-Century house, a replica of the 1636 Fairbanks House in Dedham,

the oldest timber frame house in North America -- on Boston Common from July 18 - 20. Other major activities during the week will include a Seventeenth-Century feast, a Thursday lecture by a "Puritan divine", folk plays, music, quack medical shows of the time, and the drama of the Seventeenth-Century life at the stocks and pillory. Continuous exhibits of period crafts and entertainment, such as wandering musicians, puppet theaters, acrobats and games in which the public can join, will provide an ever-varied background to the individual events.

The Festival will focus on the daily life and craft industries of the original New England settlements and will involve Greater Boston and New England residents and community groups in learning about Seventeenth-Century life. Contrary to the stereotypes of stern and dour Puritans, the Seventeenth Century was a time of exuberant activity; people wore brightly colored costumes; food was interesting and varied; and crafts industries and craftspeople produced some of the most intricate and skilled work anywhere in the western world. To celebrate the Seventeenth Century is to celebrate its skill and its community spirit.

The MFA and SPNEA hold the two major collections of Seventeenth-Century materials in the Boston area, and their staffs are already well trained in Seventeenth-Century research and cultural interpretation. The Plimoth Plantation is the outstanding institution in the field of interpreting the Seventeenth Century to the public, and all three institutions will contribute their resources and educational techniques. All participants in the Festival will receive training and orientation by Plimoth Plantation staff.

The articles and programs initiated during the Festival will continue to be made available to the public throughout 1980 and 1981, leading up to the major MFA exhibit "New England Begins: The Seventeenth Century" in February, 1982. There will be a continuing series of craft lectures and demonstrations, publications and films resulting from the Festival. It is hoped that a videotape or film can be made of both the Fairbanks House Project and the Seventeenth-Century Festival to be shown throughout 1980 and 1981 and as part of the MFA exhibit in February, 1982.

III. Crafts to be Demonstrated

A. The cloth trades

1. Sheep shearing and sheep management
2. Spinning -- flax preparation, wool sorting, dyeing
3. Weaving -- large box loom, small tape looms
4. Dyeing

III. Crafts to be Demonstrated (cont'd)

B. The building trades

1. Clapboard and shingle makers
2. Wheelwrights and cartwrights
3. Turners and thatchers

C. The metal trades

1. Blacksmithing -- Seventeenth-Century portable forge
2. Gunsmithing and armour-making
3. Silver-making
4. Stamping press
5. Glass-making

D. The leather trades -- cobbling, leather-working, upholstering

E. The carving trades -- wood carvers and stone carvers (including tombstones)

F. The furniture trades -- joiners, turners

G. Candlemaking

H. Pottery

I. The agricultural trades -- early breeds of cattle, swine, chickens, sheep

All craftspeople will work in authentic Seventeenth-Century techniques and costumes and many will speak in Seventeenth-Century regional dialect. Each craft will be explained in the Festival Program.

IV. Seventeenth-Century Music, Theater, Dancing, Games and Food

There will be two cookshops using Seventeenth-Century recipes and techniques with many of the items -- like fruit tarts -- for sale. Strolling musicians, mimes, jokers, and puppeteers will perform, along with groups like the New England Baroque Ensemble, The Greenwood Consort, and the Plimoth Plantation Dancers. The Loon & Heron Theatre will present a special play about children in the Seventeenth Century.

V. Publications

A. New England Month Program/Brochure

This will serve as the guide to the whole month of July, with special emphasis on the Fairbanks House and the Seventeenth-Century Festival. It will explain the crafts and the performing groups, describe the craftspeople and the technique of the period, and list the sponsors. In addition, the program will describe the visit by New England historic museums to Boston Common, the conference on New England issues, and the two New England major art exhibits by the Copley Society and the Worcester Crafts Center. To be prepared by Plimoth Plantation and Jubilee 350.

B. Guide to Seventeenth-Century Sites and Houses in New England

To be prepared by the MFA and SPNEA and distributed first at the Festival and then throughout New England during 1980 and 1981. It will list all New England historic houses, archaeological sites, and museums with strong Seventeenth-Century collections.

VI. Related Activities of New England Month: July 1980

- A. MFA builds Seventeenth-Century Fairbanks House on Common: Friday, - July 18 - Sunday, July 20
- B. Copley Society: Major competition and exhibit of New England artists at Copley Society Headquarters on Newbury Street and at Federal Reserve Bank - July and August
- C. Worcester Crafts Center: Contemporary New England Crafts -- Exhibit at City Hall Gallery - July and August
- D. Conferences of New England Governors and Mayors: On issues of shared concern such as tourism, energy, and environmental programs
- E. Reception for New England Month participants at John Hancock Observatory
- F. New England Historic Sites come to Boston Common for Jubilee 350: Includes Sturbridge Village, Strawberry Banke, the New England Continental Navy, and many others: Tuesday, July 1 - Thursday, July 17; Monday, July 28 - Thursday, July 31

